EDITOR'S NOTE: This article originally appeared in AG Our Distinctive Doctrine, available from [***My Healthy Church***](http://myhealthychurch.com/).

AG News May 9, 2019

**Baptism in the Holy Spirit**

**Do Christians receive the Holy Spirit when they are saved? If so, how is this experience different from the baptism in the Holy Spirit?**
Yes, when persons accept Christ, the Holy Spirit begins a great work in their lives. The Spirit convicts them of sin, convinces them of righteousness, and dwells within them (John 6:44; 14:17; Roman 8:9; 1 Corinthians 12:13). No one becomes a Christian without this gracious work of the Holy Spirit.

However, there is an additional and distinct ministry of the Holy Spirit called the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The Baptism is an empowering gift from God the Father that is promised to every believer (Matthew 3:11; Luke 11:13; 24:49; Acts 2:33, 38). It helps the Christian to live a holy life and also brings a new devotional attachment to Jesus Christ, making Him very real and precious. The primary purpose of the Baptism is to give greater power for witnessing (Acts 1:8). Other benefits include a greater joy in spiritual service, and a heightened sense of one's mission to the world.

**Can a person receive eternal life in heaven without the baptism in the Holy Spirit? If so, why should we be baptized in the Spirit?**
Receiving eternal life does not depend on being baptized in the Holy Spirit; for salvation is by grace through faith alone (Habakkuk 2:4; John 6:28, 29; Galatians 3:6; 5:6; Ephesians 2:8). It is a gift purchased for us by Christ when He was crucified. All we have to do is accept the gift. Just as the repentant thief on the cross next to Jesus was assured of entering paradise that very day we too are assured a place in heaven with the Father if we believe in Jesus Christ. It is most unfortunate that some have said, "Unless you have spoken in tongues you will not go to heaven." This is not true. It is contrary to the Scriptures.

At the same time, although the Bible does not say the baptism in the Spirit is required for salvation, it does tell us that Christ commanded His first followers to wait for the Holy Spirit to come upon them (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8).

The Bible commands us to "be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). This personal encounter with the Holy Spirit should be sought and cherished by every believer. With it comes a new and fuller dimension of spiritual understanding and a flow of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:9-13).

**Once a person is baptized in the Holy Spirit, why is it necessary to be refilled later?**
On the Day of Pentecost 120 disciples (committed followers of Jesus) were "filled" with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4). This fulfilled the promise Christ had made to them a few days earlier. He had said, "John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:5). But this initial experience of being baptized in the Holy Spirit is only the beginning of a lifelong experience. God wants us to remain filled with the Spirit.

Perhaps an analogy will best clarify this. As Christians we may be compared with a reservoir for producing electrical power. When we accept Christ, construction of our reservoir is complete. We now have the potential to be useful and to affect lives. But until the flood gates are opened and the cascading river waters pour through, no power is realized. So it is when we are baptized in the Holy Spirit. We open our lives to God and the Holy Spirit pours into us and through us. It is then we become most effective in God's service.

As with the reservoir, this power-generating experience is not intended to be a one-time occurrence. It is to be an ongoing process. When our spiritual power runs low, we need to return to the Source and let the blessed Holy Spirit pour into us again, bringing fresh power. This happened to the early followers of Jesus. They had already been baptized in the Spirit; but later on, when persecution arose, they needed a new surge of spiritual power; so they prayed to the Lord once again and "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 4:31).

As the Spirit-filled believer serves the Lord, there is an expenditure of spiritual power. It becomes necessary for him to open himself afresh to the Holy Spirit in order that his power may be replenished. The command in Ephesians 5:18 is literally, "Keep on being filled with the Spirit." Here lies the secret of Spirit-filled living. The Spirit-filled life is a continuous process of receiving and giving, of being filled and sharing with others, of receiving power from God and spending it in gospel service.

**Is it possible to be saved and baptized in the Holy Spirit at the same time?**
There need not be a great lapse of time between conversion (receiving Christ as Savior) and the baptism in the Holy Spirit. However, a person must first be a believer. This Baptism is not for unbelievers.

First, the Holy Spirit comes to convict a person of sin and to reveal Christ as Savior. Then He comes to fill the life with spiritual power for gospel service and victorious Christian living. The one encounter of the Spirit is to regenerate; the other is to empower. The two are not identical; they are logically sequential; but one encounter may follow the other very closely. Many believers can testify to having come to Christ as Savior, and then moments later having met Him as the Baptizer in the Spirit.

It is quite in order, assuming the presence of proper understanding, to lead a new convert into the baptism in the Holy Spirit. While "tarrying" (waiting on God in prayer) is often necessary for heart preparation and understanding, it is not improper for new believers to move quickly into the fullness of the Spirit.

**First Corinthians 13:8 says "Whether there be tongues, they shall cease" (KJV). Wouldn't this indicate the baptism in the Holy Spirit was only for those first followers 2,000 years ago?**
In order to understand this statement we need to examine its context. Paul said that prophecies will cease, tongues will be stilled, knowledge will pass away, and perfection will come (verses 8-10). Paul was speaking of a time yet future both to his original readers and to us. When the kingdom of our Lord is ushered in, perfection will come and there will be no further need of Spirit-given knowledge, prophecy, and tongues. They will disappear because they will be no longer needed. But these operations of the Spirit are still needed today.

There is no indication in Scripture that tongues would cease at the end of the first century. Tongues are to be a part of the life of the church in every generation until Christ returns to set up His perfect kingdom. Paul's perception was that spiritual gifts would be operational until that day (1 Corinthians 1:7, 8).

**Is there proof that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit experienced today is genuinely biblical?**
The proof is the same proof that supported the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. On that occasion the apostle Peter stood up and defended the outpouring by showing that it was a fulfillment of Scripture.

He began his explanation by saying, "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16). What we are experiencing in our day is that which was prophesied by Joel and which began to be fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost.

A comparison of the Book of Acts with what is happening in the modern outpouring of the Spirit reveals striking similarities in pattern and purpose. The impact of the early church, newly equipped by the power of the Holy Spirit, changed the world of that day. Similar changes are being made in human lives today through Spirit-filled servants of God. Christ is preached. Sinners are saved. The sick are healed. The kingdom of God is greatly increased. We can say, with Peter, "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel," though we have not yet seen the full extent of the spiritual awakening for which we are praying.

**Who should be baptized in the Holy Spirit?**
When the believers were assembled in prayer on the Day of Pentecost, "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them" (Acts 2:4). Not one was left out. It was not just the apostles who were filled, but all the men and all the women in that company of 120 persons. Then the apostle Peter addressed the onlookers and told them that they should be filled. He said "The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off -- for all whom the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:39).

As Peter said, the baptism in the Holy Spirit is for every believer in every generation. It is an all-inclusive promise of universal dimension. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is promised to every Christian believer.

**When a person is filled with the Holy Spirit, is he in a semi-conscious state, or is he totally coherent and aware of what is happening?**
It is clear from Scripture that there may be accompanying phenomena when a believer is baptized in the Holy Spirit. Interestingly, on the Day of Pentecost the crowd who witnessed that original outpouring of the Spirit "made fun of them" the 120 who had been filled with the Spirit. The onlookers said, "They have had too much wine" (Acts 2:13). But Peter explained, "These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:15, 16).

The point is clear: there was a dramatic human response to this divine visitation. From outward appearances it was as if these Spirit-filled believers were inebriated. Similar behavior is sometimes seen today when people are filled with the Spirit, but believers' experiences vary widely. Some have been filled with little or no emotional stirring, and yet the experience has been authentic and real. Others have been so overcome that they have been "lost in the Spirit" and oblivious to their surroundings for a time.

It is important that each seeking believer yield fully to the Holy Spirit. The accompanying phenomena are established by the sovereign choice of the Holy Spirit. But the emphasis must always be on the inner filling rather than on the emotional experience, which is contrary to the authentic work of the Holy Spirit. Such extremes must be avoided. The inner work of the Holy Spirit, rather than the outward demonstration of the human spirit, must be the focus of every seeking heart.

**Why are some people baptized in the Spirit immediately, while others seek so long without receiving the experience?**
Just prior to His ascension, Jesus told His disciples, "In a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:5). A few days later they were filled with the Spirit (Acts 2:4). Earlier the Lord had said, "I am going to send you what my Father promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). No doubt the disciples obeyed this directive; they remained in Jerusalem and spent much time in prayer. There was a "waiting" for the Spirit to come. However, once the Spirit had fallen there was no further incident of "waiting" or "tarrying." Today there is no longer any reason for waiting, except as "waiting" may relate to the preparation of the heart for the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

Some believers have received the Baptism almost immediately; others have waited for various periods of time. Why? (1) Because the Holy Spirit is sovereign, some will require a period of waiting before they are prepared to yield themselves fully to His divine control. (2) Because "the infilling" may involve a process with the Baptism coming after a wonderful and meaningful time of waiting in God's presence. Seekers should realize that any period of "waiting" only brings them closer to the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

**When an individual is seeking the baptism in the Holy Spirit, can anything be done to prepare his life or environment that will quicken the infilling?**
The question is often asked: "What can I do to claim the promise of the baptism in the Holy Spirit for my life?"

One thing the believer should do is to seek the Baptizer rather than the Baptism. It is Jesus who baptizes believers in the Holy Spirit. Seekers should focus their attention on Him rather than on an experience.

There are other steps that, if taken, will assist seekers. (1) Understand that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a gift from God. It should be received with gratitude and giving of thanks to the Giver. It cannot be earned or merited. It can only be accepted with an open and willing heart. (2) Be fully persuaded that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is both biblical and doctrinally correct. (3) Confess any known sins in your life and resolve to live a righteous life with God's help. (4) Begin to worship the Lord with expressions of praise and adoration. (5) Express to the Lord, who is the Baptizer, a desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit for His glory. (6) Yield to any deep "welling up" within your spirit and allow that inner surge to break through in expressions of worship, praise, and adoration in a language unknown to you but meaningful to God.